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McKenzie's Three-Pointer With 4.4 Seconds Left Lifts Pirates To 78-76 Win





Posted: Feb 27, 2010

SAVANNAH, Ga. - Senior **Keron McKenzie** buried a three-pointer with 4.4 seconds remaining to lift Armstrong Atlantic State into the 2010 PBC Tournament with a 78-76 win over visiting Francis Marion on Senior Night at Alumni Arena on Saturday.

McKenzie's bucket clinched the No. 4 seed in the PBC East Division for the Pirates (12-15, 7-11 PBC), who have erased the memory of an 0-9 start in league play to finish the season with seven wins in their last nine contests. Francis Marion (18-9, 10-8 PBC) will be the No. 3 seed after suffering its third straight loss.

A premature celebration could have begun for the Pirates as AASU forced 14 first-half turnovers and shot 56 percent from the floor, hitting 8-of-14 from three-point range in building a 46-31 lead at halftime. But, much like FMU did two years ago in erasing a 17-point lead in the final 8:40 to knock off the Pirates, the second half held more drama.

Francis Marion began the second half on a 22-4 run, taking a 56-53 lead on Bryant Julious' three-pointer with 11:40 remaining. The Patriots would stretch that lead to seven, 68-61, with 5:05 left, but the Pirates would climb back into it in the final minute.

A floater from Patrick Shokpeka cut the lead to two, 75-73, with 57 seconds left, and a foul put FMU's Andrew Smith on the line with 38 seconds left, where Smith made one of two to make the lead three.

McKenzie was fouled in the act of shooting a three-pointer with 27 seconds remaining and the senior made two to cut the lead to one, 76-75. Kendrick Robinson missed a quick shot for the Patriots and Shokpeka grabbed the rebound with 19 seconds left, setting up the final game-winning shot.

The three-pointer by McKenzie in front of the AASU bench gave the Pirates the two-point lead and Francis Marion's last ditch three attempt by Robinson as the clock expired hit off the rim, propelling the Pirates into the PBC Tournament.

McKenzie scored a game-high 26 points on 6-of-14 shooting from three-point range and 8-of-10 from the free throw line. Fellow senior Shokpeka added 20 points and eight rebounds, while sophomore Chris Vanlandingham chipped in 13. Two other seniors closed out their AASU home careers on Saturday as Gabriel Robinson added seven points, six rebounds and nine assists while Marquise Duvall added five points and eight rebounds.

Francis Marion placed four players in double figures, led by Robinson's 19 points and Smith's 19 points. Simel Boyd added a double-double with 11 points and 16 rebounds, while Julious added 11 points.

AASU will play in the first round of the PBC Tournament on Wednesday, March 3, at Augusta State at 7 p.m. The winner advances to the PBC Final Four in Aiken, S.C., on March 6-7.

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